

humiliation saved a single American life or led to the capture of any major terrorist."

The abuse of detainees in U.S. custody has severely undermined our Nation's position in the world. And yet congressional Republicans are still unwilling to call for an independent investigation to determine what exactly is happening in these prisons.

How can we possibly regain our credibility in the world until we actually investigate the possibilities of abuse? We still do not know why these abuses took place.

RONNIE EARLE AND ETHICS

(Mr. MCHENRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I may be new to Washington politics. I may be new to this partisan game played here. But it appears to me there is more politics masquerading in legalese and ethics today.

The coordinated attack strategy by the Democrat leadership against our Republican leadership has been shown for what it is, once again. It is a political side show with partisanship as its base that is attempting to assassinate our good leaders' on the Republican side rights.

Yesterday's National Review reports that Ronnie Earle, the Texas prosecutor who is the designated hit man for the Democrats, has been indicting several companies over alleged campaign finance violations. But he dropped those charges when they would pay and make contributions to his pet projects, his pet causes. An end for those charges, those contributions, have been made. Dollars for dismissal, Mr. Speaker. Pay off the left-wing prosecutor with big donations to pretty pink projects, and they might get off the hook.

It turns out that the prosecutor has also been on a witch hunt against our leadership, and he has, in fact, appeared at Democrat fundraisers to brag about. It is more Democrat side show politics, and that is what this is all about.

REPUBLICAN ABUSES OF POWER: REPUBLICANS DO NOT WANT ETHICS COMMITTEE TO MEET

(Mr. BUTTERFIELD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, last week the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), majority leader, blamed House Democrats for the fact that the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct has still been unable to hear the case against him. Mr. Speaker, House Democrats are trying to abide by the rules that this House passed at the beginning of the year. It is the Republicans and the chairman who refuse to follow the rules. They want to ap-

point a partisan staff director to lead their efforts on the committee despite House rules that explicitly state staffers be nonpartisan professionals.

The Committee on Standards of Official Conduct is supposed to be a place where Members can get straight, unbiased, trustworthy ethics guidance. How can Members who might have disagreements with the House leadership feel comfortable going to the committee for advice if they fear committee staff members are incapable of performing their official duties in a nonpartisan fashion?

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, why the Republicans want to appoint partisan staffers to the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. Could it be that they like a partisan staffer in a room when decisions are made about certain Members of this House? We have to wonder.

SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, Social Security reform is an idea whose time has come. And thanks to the leadership of President George W. Bush, we are engaged in a national conversation about addressing the long-term 21st century challenges that the Social Security system faces when some 40 million retirees become 80 million retirees.

The American people, candidly, Mr. Speaker, have not agreed on what the right thing to do is yet. But most of my constituents know that we ought to stop doing the wrong thing. It has simply been wrong these last 4 decades for the Congress of the United States to take the Social Security surplus and apply it to spending on big government.

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We need to stop raiding the Social Security trust fund. Use those resources to give younger Americans voluntary personal savings accounts and that will begin the reform of this critical entitlement. Let us stop the raid on the Social Security trust funds. Let us give younger Americans more choice. It is time to reform Social Security. Let the debate begin.

REALITY DISCONNECT

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, at a time when the Bush administration continues to paint a rosy picture of the situation in Iraq, Congress should really be investigating why exactly the administration is misleading both the American public and Members of this institution.

While most Republicans in this Chamber continue to take the Bush administration's rhetoric as fact, Repub-

lican Senator CHUCK HAGEL of Nebraska states in this week's U.S. News and World Report: "The White House is completely disconnected from reality. It's like they're just making it up as they go along."

That is a Republican Senator. It would be nice if other Republicans would follow suit. For some reason Republicans think they are supporting troops in Iraq if they remain silent about what is going on there. Are Republicans supporting our troops when they refuse to question misleading statements like that from Vice President CHENEY that the Iraqi insurgents are in their "last throes"? Are Republicans supporting our troops when they refuse to support investigation into prisoner abuse scandals, scandals that many, including former Secretary of State Colin Powell, believe are harming both our reputation and our troops?

Silence is not the best way to help our troops.

FALLEN HEROES CAMPAIGN

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I wish to praise the admirable actions of First Coast Energy Shell Corporation, a Jacksonville-based company from my congressional district.

During the third annual Tribute to Heroes campaign, First Coast Energy Shell has pledged to raise \$75,000 for the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund. This fund provides military families whose loved ones have been killed or wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan with financial and emotional support.

Beginning on Memorial Day and continuing through the Fourth of July, First Coast Energy Shell will donate a portion of all gasoline sales to this fund. I share in First Coast Energy's belief that "the military is an important part of our community" and that we should all actively support and honor those heroes who have sacrificed so much for our country.

I am proud to represent such patriotic and generous constituents and strongly urge my fellow Members to visit www.fallenheroesfund.org to learn more about this very good campaign.

GREAT SOCIAL SECURITY PLAN

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, well, I welcome the born again saviors of Social Security on the Republican side of the aisle. They have been looting the program for years, and now they want to make it right.

The President this year will borrow \$168 billion from Social Security, money only extracted from people who work for wages and salary, and will transfer part of it to the wealthiest in

America, many of whom do not even pay Social Security tax. And he is replacing that money with these bonds. And now the President questions whether the government will honor these bonds with the full faith and credit of the Government of the United States.

So Republicans have a great new idea: Social Security will not hold the bonds anymore. They will issue them to individuals. Now, if we are not going to honor these bonds for all the people of America, what assurance do people have that those individual bonds will be honored, and the Republicans want to charge them a management fee and a so-called claw-back. So anybody that takes one of those individual bonds, if it is honored, is guaranteed to get less than they would under the existing system. Oh, that is a great plan, guys.

PROTECT THE FLAG

(Mr. CUNNINGHAM asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, let us talk about something positive that both Republicans and Democrats are going to do today and that is pass the flag protection amendment.

Sixteen years ago, a difference of one vote, the Supreme Court by one vote erased 200 years of tradition that our forefathers set to protect our flag. Who supports it? In May, 81 percent of the American people supported this amendment; 146, all the veterans organizations, many of them here today, first responders, police, fire, our military men and women; all 50 States have ratified resolutions saying that they will ratify when this amendment passes.

We have 300 signatures. This bill passed by 300 votes; and for the first time we have a chance, an opportunity to pass it in the Senate.

Some claim that it impinges on the first amendment. It does not. There are some of my colleagues that will oppose this amendment. They are honorable men, but the supermajority oppose their position. Take a look and ask the men and women at Walter Reed or Bethesda, ask the police and fire that stood on top of the Trade Center and ask them and they will tell you. Help pass this amendment today.

INVESTIGATE GUANTANAMO BAY

(Mr. McDERMOTT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the House had an opportunity to see what really happened at Guantanamo Bay. If the Republicans are so sure that nothing bad happened there, why can we not have some hearings?

Now, they continued to be reassured by the White House. This is the White House that told them there were weap-

ons of mass destruction in Iraq. This is the administration that told them that the oil industry in Iraq would pay for all the reconstruction. We are now about \$300 billion in. And this is the administration that last month said we are in the last throes of the insurgency.

If anybody on this floor ever served in the military, you know that what went on in Abu Ghraib and what goes on in Guantanamo did not start at the private and the corporal level. It started at the top. And until we do an investigation of the policy papers that were put out of the White House from the Attorney General who was then the President's counsel and the general, General Sanchez, he just got promoted. This is the guy in charge of Abu Ghraib. They put six or eight guys in jail, but he got a promotion. That needs an investigation.

VITAL WORK AT GUANTANAMO BAY

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the vital work that takes place at Guantanamo Bay. To say, as a member of the Senate Democratic leadership recently did, that this base is similar to Nazi Germany or Pol Pot is not only deeply offensive but also wholly incorrect.

Mr. Speaker, I visited Guantanamo twice with the House Committee on Armed Services. Let me tell you what I observed there: new and up-to-date facility that allows for the humane treatment of prisoners; prisoners being treated with dignity and in accordance with the Geneva Convention; detainees freely practicing their religious observances.

Mr. Speaker, the overwhelming majority of American troops are performing with honor. When someone throws around offensive slurs for the purpose of political posturing, they jeopardize the very safety of the men and women who protect us and add resolve to those terrorists who wish us harm. These slurs are a horrific disservice to the American people who are counting on us to stop terrorism from once again rearing its ugly head within our borders.

THREE-LEGGED STOOL

(Mr. MELANCON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MELANCON. Mr. Speaker, we have all heard of the 3-legged stool that each of us should build when we are looking towards our retirement. Two of these legs, pensions and individual savings, are the responsibility of the individual and the employee.

Mr. Speaker, as events over the last month have shown, it is clear that the pension leg of the stool is being seri-

ously undermined by companies who are striking their responsibilities to live up to the promises they made to their employees. The best example of this comes in the form of United Airlines who sold out its employees the first chance it got as a way to come out of bankruptcy.

Employees who have been promised \$100,000 a year pensions will now have to settle for \$45,000 a year, a dramatic cut in their promised benefits. That may still seem like a lot of money, but these employees were promised a lot more, and they are not going to receive it.

Couple that with the giant market crash in 2000 when the stock market lost \$9 billion. Mr. Speaker, there is no question that there is a lot of uncertainty right now, and maybe that is why Americans are so determined to keep one thing that is certain, that is, Social Security from being privatized.

PATIENT CHOICE

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, as a third-generation physician who has practiced medicine for over 20 years, I have seen colossal increases in health care costs. Unfortunately, they do not seem to be slowing down. Health care costs are rising much faster than one can imagine, and in just the last year they have gone up by 8 percent. Employers continue to pass these costs on to their employees in the form of increased deductibles and payments for prescriptions and care. Employees have no choice but to pay these costs because they are stuck with somebody else making decisions about their care.

It is time we start thinking about health care in a new way. It is time to put patients back in charge. Nobody knows better than the patients themselves what kind of health care they need.

Mr. Speaker, change in our health care system is needed now more than ever before, and health care should respond to the needs of patients.

H. Res. 215, the Health Insurance Patient-Ownership Plan, puts health care choices back into the hands of patients where they should be. I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 215.

TRADE DEFICIT

(Mrs. MALONEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, this Republican Congress may go down in history as the most fiscally irresponsible Congress in the history of this country. Our record budget deficit, our record debt, we have over \$7.8 trillion in debt, and each citizen's share is over \$26,000. Last week we learned that our trade deficit set a new record, over \$195 billion in the first 3 months of this